

An aerial photograph of a large estate. A river flows through the upper half of the image. Below the river is a large green field with scattered trees. In the center, there is a large, multi-story house with a central tower and several wings, surrounded by a dense forest. The foreground is filled with more trees and a path leading towards the house.

# HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

AUTUMN  
NEWSLETTER  
2015



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***Front Cover: Woodhall, aerial view  
of the 18th C House and Parkland***

The venue for an HGT Study Day on '*The Capability Men*'  
16th April, 2016

***Back Cover: HGT Parks and Garden Visits, 2015***  
(Photos by John Craggs)

## The Chairman's Report—Bella Stuart-Smith



Our last HGT event for the year has just ended and as I skipped out into the bright London autumnal sunshine I wondered what had put me in such a good mood. Was it the sight of Brueghel's paradise, Maria Sybilla Merian's twirling caterpillar antennae, the huge fun finding life's rich tapestry gathering in the eighteenth century picture of the Mall, or the mad opulence of jewelled Faberge flowers? It could just have been the noise of all our

members gathered for coffee, catching up, excited and in a private room in the Queens Gallery. It was a great high to end on and we have Annie Saner to thank for planning and organising wonderful events over the year. It is a huge effort finding speakers, locations and marshalling us all and we are incredibly lucky to be able to benefit from all her hard work.

It was lovely to see so many here at Pie Corner for the AGM and the sun shone despite the need for rugs and braziers! Later in July, at the Association of Gardens Trusts AGM a majority voted to amalgamate with The Garden History Society, and a new organisation *The Garden Trust* has formed. Kate Harwood has been elected a trustee. She was also recognised as AGT Volunteer of the Year which speaks volumes about what she does both in the county and nationwide.

The Gardens Trust ([www.thegardenstrust.org](http://www.thegardenstrust.org)) is a major step forward, as it will ensure that there is one expert voice who will speak for historic designed landscapes and their preservation and conservation. There will undoubtedly be teething problems as the new organisation beds down and reconciles the different aspects of the two organisations, but it will ensure a more secure future maximising limited resources, both financial and human.

As was explored at a recent regional forum, the garden trusts are the frontline when it comes to conservation. All the research work that we have undertaken needs to be fed into the planning system, where cuts at district and county level mean that previous expertise and knowledge has gone. We really do need to make our research and expertise count. Following on from a training session that was held in the spring, I hope you will be interested to read the article about Hunsdon and how its history and significance has been encapsulated so it can be of use on the district local list. We have a template which I hope all of our research team will feel confident to follow, well supported by the expertise of both Anne Rowe and Kate Harwood.

It is also very good to hear that the Jellicoe Hemel Water Gardens are to be taken off Historic England's at risk register. This is in no small part due to our work which all started some years ago at a study day on the subject, and led to the creation of a friends group and now its restoration which is taking shape as the pictures show.

The new Mrs Wheelbarrow Grant has launched. This combines practical expertise with financial assistance and is, I think, proving valuable to the winning schools. Fine tuning the aspirations of staff into plans that can be realised practically, saves a huge amount of time and money, and the end result will be better for all of us and most importantly the children. I look forward to reporting what the schools achieve with the help of some dedicated Mrs Wheelbarrows. We are also starting to gather ideas as to how best to work in secondary schools and your contacts and ideas are really important here so thank you to all who have responded since the AGM. It is a work in progress.

The primary schools who will benefit this year are a complete cross section, large and small, rural and urban and are: St Catherine's C of E Hoddesdon, The Grove Academy Watford, Layston First School Buntingford, St Bartolomew's School Wiggington, St Joseph's RC Primary South Oxhey, and Icknield Walk First School Royston.

Looking forward we have a mega year: CB300 is finally upon us and there is so much in fact, that we need an additional newsletter to tell you about it. I hope you enjoy it all and please come to as much as you can. I am excited by everything we have in store, as are the committee and all those who put so much work into the planning. Thank you for all your help and to the editor, Roger Gedyne, for doing such a brilliant job in making sure you all get to hear so much of the news and views of HGT.

### **Not an HGT member yet?**

Full details of the benefits of membership, together with a membership application form, may be obtained from the website:

[www.hertfordshiregardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.hertfordshiregardenstrust.org.uk)

Or, contact the Hon. Membership Secretary:

Email—[p.d.figgis@talktalk.net](mailto:p.d.figgis@talktalk.net) or telephone: 01707 261400

## Jellicoe Water Gardens Restoration - “Serpent” Update

Since the update in autumn 2012 there has been a lot of activity culminating in the award of a £2.4 million grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund/Big Lottery Fund Parks for People programme in July 2014. In addition to this Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) is contributing £1 million to the project.

There is now an established, enthusiastic and very committed Friends group who have been busy working alongside the DBC team providing feedback on the project plans and getting involved in a variety of events, visits and training. We have been helping to publicise the restoration project, learning more about Geoffrey Jellicoe and preparing ourselves for future activities including garden maintenance, wildlife monitoring, an oral history project and visitor surveys.

Before starting restoration a number of trees had to be felled, this was done in January before the birds began nesting. DBC then organised a Wildlife Day where mobile sawmills cut the trees into usable planks and Friends with carpentry skills used the wood to make bird and bat boxes for the gardens.

On a cold Saturday in February one group of Friends travelled to Bushey Rose Gardens for a rose pruning workshop while another group attended training on river fly monitoring on the river Chess at Latimer. We won't start river fly monitoring until restoration work is complete, but pruning skills have already been put to good use in the flower gardens.



*Pruning team at work in the Water Gardens*



*Clearing timber from the river bank*



In complete contrast, on a glorious sunny day in June Kate Harwood took us on a tour around the gardens at Cliveden and after lunch one of the gardeners explained their recent restoration of the Jellicoe rose garden. It was particularly interesting to hear how the original design had been adapted and how the different roses were chosen. We were all very taken by a delicate orange climber called "Warm Welcome".

Restoration work proper started in August and at the time of writing is centred on the Serpent's "tail". This area has been drained and silt is being removed prior to repairing the bridges, reinstating eroded banks and building a fish pass for the weir. In addition to bridge repairs the howdah flower garden and pleached lime avenues will be restored, water quality will be improved and a new serpent themed play area will be built, overlooked by new seating. There will also be a growing area and community building for use by schools and learning groups, volunteer and Friends groups. The project will be complete in summer 2016.

You can follow the restoration on our Facebook page  
<https://www.facebook.com/jellicoe watergardens>



*An artist's impression of the Jellicoe flower garden restoration*

## Researching Hunsdon and compiling a Local List entry

### What is the Local List?

The HGT research group held a well-attended soup and seminar event in Woolmer Green in February, when we gathered to hear how we can make our research count by contributing entries to the HGT's Local List. A project run by the conservation team, identifying the significance of all unregistered sites and adding the appropriate planning dimension, the Local List is a valuable resource for planning officers and of interest to anyone researching the history of their local area.

Kate Harwood explained how to convert a research report into a Local List entry, and Isobel Thompson, who is responsible for the County Council's computerised Historic Environment Record, told us how the Research Group's work feeds into the planning process. The morning was a timely reminder of how our research can have real impact on the future of Hertfordshire's landscape, and we were thoroughly briefed about how to make our individual contributions to the evidence base. As I have recently finished a research report, I will be following Kate's guidelines to produce a Local List entry.



*Hunsdon House today: Photograph courtesy Hunsdon Historical Society*

My research was on the park and gardens of Hunsdon House, a site in east Hertfordshire that first appears in local records in the thirteenth century. The house metamorphosed from fortified manor to Tudor royal residence, through Jacobean gentry house to nineteenth century gothic showpiece, but at the beginning of the research I felt daunted by how thin the evidence about the gardens seemed to be. No significant gardeners or designers had left a trace. An archaeological report made no mention of garden features. I read the diaries of Mrs Frances Calvert, a nineteenth-century beauty who presided over Hunsdon while her husband was MP for Hertford. But she wrote not a word about gardens, preferring London, people and parties: Mrs C, it turned out, loathed the country. Things went further downhill when the house's present owner declined to allow access to survey any remaining historical features of the site.

Nevertheless I found a glimpse of the Tudor house and park in the background to a portrait of the future Edward VI, and a Drapentier engraving of the Jacobean house and gardens. I still had nothing on the eighteenth century, but OS maps and aerial photos filled in later gaps, together with surveys and sales brochures from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



*Drapentier's engraving of Hunsdon, from Chauncy's 'The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire', 1700.*

As I researched five centuries of owners I realised how closely their history mirrors the development of the county itself. Tudor and Stuart royalty, attracted to Hertfordshire by the clean air and good hunting not far from town, were followed after the Civil War by lawyers and merchants, as city money bought space and status in the country and the house was reduced from rambling palace to gentry residence. The development of the Lea as a navigable waterway for the transportation of barley attracted brewers to the county in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their wealth funded both Hunsdon's transformation into an elegant country house with the moat filled in, gothic turrets added and lawns sweeping up to a terrace, and the parliamentary careers of their sons.



An old photocopy in Local Studies seemed to show a drawing of the house in the eighteenth century, but the source was a mystery. Finally, among the unbound sheets in a proof copy of Robert Clutterbuck's early nineteenth-century history of Hertfordshire I found some of the author's own sketches. There was the mystery drawing, and more, showing each façade of the house in 1758. Here were the pleasure grounds, the kitchen gardens, and the moat reinvented as an ornamental feature. 'From a drawing in the possession of Nicolson Calvert at Hunsdon House' was the note under each sketch. Mrs Calvert's diary finally came in useful, as I remembered her mention of a visit Clutterbuck made to the house.



*Hunsdon House in 1758.  
North view (HALS DE/CI/  
Z11/442)*

*Hunsdon House in 1758.  
South view (HALS DE/CI/  
Z11/444).*



More pieces of the historical jigsaw fell into place when Anne Rowe helped me solve the mystery of why no kitchen gardens seemed to be associated with the house on the 1880 first edition OS map. Identifying glasshouses on the adjoining map, finding that nearby listed buildings included the remains of a walled garden, and examining the tithe award documents listing landholdings, we concluded that the kitchen gardens were sited with some much earlier service buildings at Copthall, to the north of the main site.

## Statement of significance

How much of this history can I put into the 'Statement of Significance' that will form the core of the Local List entry? Very little, it turns out, because lost features and past glories do not count. When Kate asked us to consider 'what is significant about significance' she identified four headings.

**Evidential value.** What new evidence might the site yield about past human activity and what is its value for future research? I could not view Hunsdon's gardens to explore any interesting lumps and bumps, but the limited archaeological investigations that took place in the 1980s, revealing the Tudor moat and other features, show that much remains to be discovered.

**Historical value.** How is the site connected to our national story? Pevsner described the house, which is Grade I listed, as of the greatest historical interest. Henry VIII and all his children used Hunsdon. Then it was for centuries the home of lawyers, brewers and MPs whose fortunes both reflected and shaped history. Its parks and gardens flourished or declined in line with national economic and social changes.

**Aesthetic value.** What is the emotional appeal of a place? It may be designed or fortuitous. While the great parks that once surrounded Hunsdon have gone, the open parkland aspect of its remaining 87 acres of grounds persists. Its distinctive, gently undulating landscape, with large specimen trees, includes the remains of an eighteenth-century lime walk, a nineteenth-century avenue of Wellingtonia, the outline of a Victorian garden near the house, and ornamental ponds.

**Communal value.** This is currently limited, as Hunsdon is closed to visitors. In the past it was used for local events, and history groups and county archaeologists were welcomed. The memory of its value to the community remains in records and photographs and perhaps this dimension will reappear in the future.

*A major development project under consideration proposes the building of up to 10,000 new homes in the open country between Hunsdon and nearby Harlow. Kate has already brought the consultant archaeologists' attention to the existence of historic parks in the area, and to the relevant HGT research reports on Hunsdon and Gilston. Local List entries for this and other historic sites will help to safeguard them by alerting planners to their significance at an early stage*

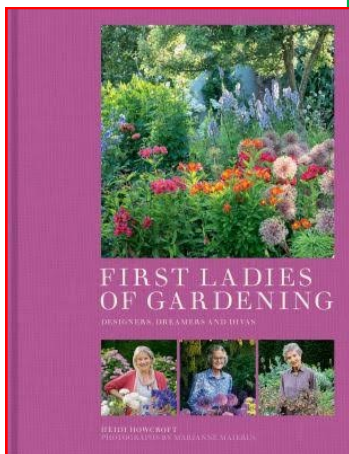
## Book Review—Helen Leiper

### *First Ladies of Gardening: Pioneers, Designers and Dreamers* by Heidi Howcroft (Pub. Frances Lincoln, 2015)

With only a few weeks to go until Christmas, would a gardening book be a nice surprise for someone you know? *First Ladies of Gardening: Pioneers, Designers and Dreamers* is a beautifully illustrated new book from landscape architect Heidi Howcroft and photographer Marianne Majerus. The authors set out to celebrate modern, private, English gardens and during their research they found that many of their favourite twentieth century gardens were created or are currently maintained by women. Each garden is skilfully illustrated and introduced with an account of its history, its particular character and the gardener's guiding principles with signature plants highlighted at the end of each chapter.

The fourteen featured gardens and gardeners are divided into two sections. The first, 'Pioneers of Design', looks back at English flower gardens through the work of some of the most famous gardeners of the last century. Gertrude Jekyll, Vita Sackville-West, Rosemary Verey, Mary Keen and Beth Chatto are among the more familiar names, while the work of Margery Fish, Miss Havergal and Anne Chambers, who continues in the footsteps of Heather Muir at Kiftgate Court, is also included. The second section, entitled 'New Directions', introduces six more recently developed gardens with their owners and considers how they have approached the challenges of their various sites in England and in the case of Helen Dillon, her garden in Dublin. For those interested in garden visiting, most are open to the public, even if only rarely through the National Gardens Scheme and all but two addresses are included, along with a useful bibliography for further reading.

Heidi Howcroft finds that these exceptional gardeners are all linked by their love of plants and a determination to acquire the skills needed to manage them. Many of the women found themselves taking up gardening more by chance than design and this book offers gentle encouragement and inspiring examples for gardeners of all abilities. I think most amateur gardeners would be happy to unwrap this book on Christmas morning.





## Dates for your Diary, 2016—'CB300'

2016 is the Tercentenary of Capability Brown's birth and there are celebrations all over the country. HGT have put together a programme celebrating not only Brown but those others, such as Richmond, Woods, and Lapidge, who worked in the Brownian landscape tradition.

A special *Lancelot 'Capability' Brown* edition of the Spring Newsletter will be published in April 2016, giving further details of all the year's events, including the regular HGT garden visits.

***As some of these events take place early in the year, and all may prove to be popular, HGT members are advised to register their interest as soon as possible.***

**Exhibition** at The New Maynard Gallery in Welwyn Garden City of the change from Brown's landscape at Digswell through to Ebenezer Howard's Garden City superimposed on it and what we can still detect of the original design.

Dates: January 11—February 27

Contact: [hertstalks@gmail.com](mailto:hertstalks@gmail.com)

**The Capability Men** Study Day at Woodhall Park (Heathmount School) Watton- at-Stone with Ralph Abel Smith, Tom Williamson and David Brown

Date: April 16

Contact: [hertstalks@gmail.com](mailto:hertstalks@gmail.com)

**Summer Walks programme** Guided walks round some of our Brownian landscapes to go with our new walks leaflets. Details to be confirmed.

Dates: to be confirmed.

Contact: [hertstalks@gmail.com](mailto:hertstalks@gmail.com)

**The Life and Work of Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1716-1783)**

Ashridge Summer School

Venue: Ashridge

Dates: 5-7 August

Contact: [sally.rouse@ashridge.org.uk](mailto:sally.rouse@ashridge.org.uk)

**Lecture at Beechwood School**, Markyate (set in a Brown Landscape) from Tim Scott Bolton

Date: October 25

Contact: a 'flyer' for this event will accompany the Spring Newsletter.

**The Annual General Meeting of the HGT will be held at 'Youngsbury' on July 14**

Capability Brown's plan for 'Youngsbury' (1769) is still displayed in the house. Unusually for a Hertfordshire estate, much of the 18thC landscape has survived in a recognisable form to the present day.

**There are also a number of events being held by our neighbouring gardens trusts.**

**Bedfordshire Gardens Trust—Luton Hoo Walled Garden**

Study Day: 'A Capability Brown Walled Garden'

Date: April 6

Contact: [research@lhwg.co.uk](mailto:research@lhwg.co.uk)

**Suffolk Gardens Trust—Heveningham Hall Stables, Suffolk**

Study Day: 'Capability Brown in Suffolk'

Date: 15 July

Contact: [stephenbinkybeaumont@gmail.com](mailto:stephenbinkybeaumont@gmail.com)

**Cambridge, Robinson College**

TGT Conference on Capability Brown

Date: 2 – 4 September

Details: <http://cambsgardens.org.uk/event/special-conference-on-lancelot-capability-brown/>

**And further afield:**

***Capability Brown Royal Gardener - the man and his business: Past, Present and Future***

Venue: Hampton Court Palace

Dates: 6-8 June

***What Capability Brown did for Ecology: the legacy for biodiversity, landscapes & nature conservation***

Venue: Sheffield Hallam University

Dates: 15-17 June

***ICOMOS-UK: Capability Brown, reception and response in a global context***

Venue: Bath University

Dates: 9-11 September

***For more information on Brown and events in 2016 go to:  
<http://www.parksandgardens.org/projects/capability-brown>***

## Woodhall—Ralph Abel Smith

The earliest mention of Woodhall (known as Watton Woodhall), dating from the reign of Edward III (1327 – 1377), is in Camden’s Britannia which records that the Boteler family occupied the house as “a quadrangle built of brick on each side of a brick round towered gateway, a gallery of three hundred foot long, one half was destroyed by fire in 1772”. According to Chauncy’s History of Hertfordshire “The manor of Watton Woodhall is seated upon a dry hill in a pleasant park, well wooded and greatly timbered, where diverse crystal springs issue out of the ground at some distance before the house, which run on the south side hereof to the Beane. They do greatly adorn the seat and the park and the hills, the timber trees and these waters render this place so very pleasant and delicious to the eye that it is accounted one of the best seats in the county”.

It was approached from London up the (then) Great Cambridge Road, branching off at Ware into the entrance we now call the Ware Lodge, which gives onto an avenue that formed the main drive to the house. On each side there are oak trees that would date back to that period and glades of hornbeam on both the flat and hilly areas.



*Woodhall—the 'Big House' and the Broadwater*



When the house was destroyed by fire in 1772, the Boteler family sold the entire property in 1778 to Sir Thomas Rumbold, an Indian nabob and Governor of Madras, who commissioned the building of a new house by the architect Thomas Leverton, some 300 yards apart and on higher ground; the remains of the Boteler house were demolished and replaced by the stable block on the same site.

Rumbold returned from Madras to find his new house built, decorated and furnished but he died in 1791 and in 1794 his Executors sold the entire property to Paul Benfield, also an Indian nabob. He enlarged the house by building a second storey to each wing between the central block and the pavilions. He went bankrupt and in 1799 attempted to sell the property, but due to the adverse economic situation prevailing at the time, exacerbated by the wars with France, failed to find a buyer. He put the property on the market again in 1801 when Samuel Smith MP, a banker from Nottingham, purchased the property. He made many improvements, including the building of the walled gardens (undertaken, it is said, by the prisoners of war of the Napoleonic Wars and in which Paxton served some of his apprenticeship) and it seems that he laid out the landscape in front of the Leverton house in the Georgian landscape mode which, during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century had overtaken the geometric, formal gardens imported from the Continent. It is considered that the parkland as we know it is more of a Repton style than a Brown style.



Part of his landscaping scheme was to dam up the River Beane to create a lake (known as the Broadwater) on the upper side and a cascade on the lower side. He added to the acreage of the Estate by some additional land acquisitions in the locality.

*Woodhall—The Avenue, leading  
from the Stables towards  
Ware Lodge*

He died in 1834 and was succeeded by his oldest son, Abel Smith MP (referred to as Abel I), who continued with improvements and enhancements to the house and the parkland, and the wider Estate generally. He built the park wall in 1838 and with it the lodges and lodge houses, and laid out more parkland drives and bridges. Many of the Estate's farm buildings were erected in the 1840's together with houses, cottages, etc. Abel I died in 1869 and was succeeded by his oldest son, also called Abel Smith MP (referred to as Abel II), who continued to invest in the infrastructure of the Estate, as is evidenced by Victorian houses in the villages (including schools) and farm buildings.

Abel I's second son, called Robert Smith, inherited some land near Hertford and built the large Victorian house known as Goldings, designed by the architect Devey, and Waterford Church which was consecrated in 1872.

Abel II died in 1898 and Woodhall was inherited by Colonel Abel Henry Smith MP, whose ownership was beleaguered by the introduction of death duties, the First World War and the post-war recession. When he died in 1930 the contents of the house were dispersed and the house was let to Heath Mount School. Things were no easier during the tenure of his younger brother, Edward Pelham Smith, who died in 1937 when he was succeeded by Thomas Abel Smith, who was faced with the economic uncertainties caused by the Second World War, death duties and the general recession in agriculture, during which time only essential maintenance could be undertaken.

After the War, the Estate, along with many others, began its period of revival. This was not only due to the 1947 Agriculture Act which introduced agricultural support for farmers through the Guaranteed Price Mechanism that provided funding from both direct agriculture and through agricultural rents (and the Cheap Food Policy for the housewife), but also through a more entrepreneurial approach by their owners. These led to the restoration of the Estates' finances; and thus began the reparations to houses, gardens, parklands and general infrastructure.

The main house at Woodhall, although it has been occupied by a school for many years, remains the focal point of the Estate and dominates the parkland landscape.

The former stables were converted into a family home by my father Thomas Abel Smith in 1957, which is where the family continue to live.

*Alexandra and I, together with the Estate team, look forward to welcoming the HGT to the CB300 Study Day on the 16th April 2016.*

## Haileybury Study Day, 18th April 2015 - Mary Buckle

I have always had an interest in the East India Company so was delighted to enrol on a Study Day at Haileybury, the Company's training college from 1806 to 1857. The buildings now house an Independent School and have done so since 1862.

We were treated with an excellent group of speakers. First off was Toby Parker who is a teacher and the archivist at Haileybury. He has researched the history of the estate from the remaining papers at the British Library. Unfortunately many documents are missing, destroyed either accidentally or deliberately. There is a bill from Humphry Repton for £52. 10s for a book of sketches, a report and plans. Was this a 'Red Book'? If so, where is it now?

The next speaker was Amy Thomas, an ex-pupil at Haileybury, who studied the architecture of the East India College for her undergraduate dissertation. The College was originally situated in Hertford Castle. The Company's architect until his death in 1806 was Henry Holland and his design for the new College was in the Gothic style. However the Directors chose a design by William Wilkins in the Greek Revival style with four ranges built around a grass quadrangle 120 yards square. The quad was accessed via the West Front from an avenue of chestnuts under a Propylaeum. The South Front was the eye-catcher with its three porticos to give interest to a long façade.

Our final speaker before lunch was Mick Thompson from Ashridge, well known to many, who gave an interesting talk on Repton and his style and plants that he used. Repton did visit the site many times but the actual management and planting of the gardens was overseen by Thomas Barr of Balls Pond Nursery. Some plant lists are extant.

*The South front.*



*The West front from inside the quad.*



We then broke for lunch which was provided in the school dining hall. The architecture was very interesting and inspired one to see more of the interior. The food was excellent and duly refreshed we returned for our final speaker, Tom Williamson and a walk round the grounds. Tom spoke about the difference between Humphry Repton and Lancelot Brown and how Repton's gardens were often different to the suggestions made in the Red Books; either he changed his mind once he got the commission or the client demanded something different. At Haileybury it was the Company that requested the avenue. This was a new type of project for Repton as he was used to the landscape of stately homes rather than institutional buildings.

At 2.15 we started our walk, leaving the quad by the west gate to see the entrance drive. We then inspected the two ponds which were originally brick pits: one has been partially built over and the other was a bit overgrown. Repton had drawn sketches regarding these ponds but were his ideas ever implemented? The East India Company was ever-conscious of escalating costs and postponed aspects of the work. We were shown trees that looked as though they could have been planted by Thomas Barr but due to new buildings, the use of the grounds for sports, and the loss of most of Repton's sketches and plans, it is difficult to be sure.

We finished the day with a welcome cup of tea and final discussion about how much of Repton's plan had been implemented. The day had been very interesting and enjoyable and I certainly went home a lot more knowledgeable.

*The top pond*



*The lower pond*

## Medieval or Renaissance?

### Parks and Gardens in the Tudor and early Stuart periods

Sally Pearson

Kate Harwood led the introductory session of this six week course, in inimitable style, whistling through the main features to look out for in gardens influenced by the Italian Renaissance – a more symmetrical layout, viewing points, loggias, knot gardens, obelisks, fountains, grottoes, terracing, classical sculpture, orange trees, water gardens. Hertfordshire has some of the earliest examples.

She also focussed on the increasing interest in botanical study at the time, and described how exploration of the New World stimulated collection of newly discovered plants. Two men at the leading edge of these trends worked in Hertfordshire gardens: John Gerard (Theobalds) and John Tradescant (Hatfield).

As an outstanding example of Renaissance developments, Jenny Milledge then traced the history of the gardens at Wilton (Wiltshire) created for the Earls of Pembroke, first by Adrian Gilbert and then more famously by Isaac de Caus in the 1630s. Particularly admired features were the grotto, and the gladiator statue (now at Houghton Hall). The link between theatre and garden design was typical of the time.



Emphasising continuity from the medieval period, for example in the maintenance of deer parks and fish-ponds, Anne Rowe highlighted Henry VIII's passion for hunting, and Elizabeth I's habit of paying expensive visits to her long-suffering courtiers at their country homes. She pointed out that in practice it was not the royal family who introduced Renaissance ideas at their estates in Hertfordshire, but rather their more lowly-born ministers such as Cardinal Wolsey (The More) and Lord Burghley (Theobalds).

*Lyveden New Bield  
moat and house*

Three contrasting visits brought these ideas vividly to life. The first was to an extraordinary survival – Lyveden New Bield (Northamptonshire), now in the care of the National Trust. The garden created by Sir Thomas Tresham in the reign of Elizabeth I reflects his strong Catholic faith and, apart from the inconsiderate creation of a modern tennis court at the bottom end, remains more or less intact. Alison Moller was our excellent guide through the symbolism of terraces, moat, mounts, labyrinth, and the house itself. The project was never finished, but remains impressive and atmospheric to this day.

Our second visit was to the site of Theobalds Palace (Cheshunt), created by Lord Burghley, taken over as a palace by James I, and finally completely demolished after the Civil War. Virtually nothing is left, the area is now a public park, but we were shown round by archaeologist Mike Dewbrey, who presented a convincing description of what it had once been. Excavation of the site of Burghley's garden loggia continues this summer.

Finally, Anne Rowe introduced us to Stanstead Bury, where Edward Baesh entertained Elizabeth I three times in the 1570s. Elements of the Tudor house can be seen in the present building, but what were probably significant Tudor gardens are largely buried under later developments. An intriguing series of linear embankments survive however, in the park immediately to the west of the house. We speculated on what these might once have been – ornamental canal? bowling green? viewing terrace? – multiple questions, but few clear answers!



*Excavations at Theobalds*



*Stanstead Bury—linear embankments*

## Return to Northaw Place—Anne Shellim

In June Helen Leiper and I were invited to return to Northaw Place to see what had been done to the garden over the last five years.

We first visited in 2010 when I was researching the history of the garden. The owners were concentrating on renovations to the Grade 11\* house and plans for their half of the Grade 11 walled garden were in the early stages. The garden had been neglected and was desperately in need of some care and attention.

About ten years ago when I was researching the gardens of Queenswood School I noticed on an O.S. map that there was an avenue in a neighbouring estate which did not seem to align with the centre of the house. So when the opportunity to research the garden at Northaw Place came up I volunteered.

The original house was built at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Sir George Hutchins, Serjeant-at-Law, and is recorded in a painting by Robert Robinson. Hutchins, and his dog, is standing on the south side of the house supervising the labourers carting the bricks and earth to create the garden. Since then, despite alterations and additions to the house to accommodate families and, latterly, a Prep School and a Children's Home, the walled garden Hutchins created has remained relatively unchanged. The walls were first outlined on a plan in 1757 but it is only when looking at later maps that you see a typical walled garden divided into quarters. As garden fashion changed so did the garden. Trees, shrubs and flower borders were planted, paths disappeared and a large Fish Pond was put in, which was used as a swimming pool by the Prep School and in 1987 it was filled in. There were ornamental iron gates in the South wall and over the years several other openings were made.



*The walled garden at Northaw Place*



Another feature of the 1757 plan was a double-planted avenue of Lime trees stretching away from the north of the house over parkland. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century maps record the avenue but by 1836, when the estate was sold, only two of the four rows of trees remained resulting in the curious misalignment with the house which I had seen on the O.S. map. Photographs for the School prospectus in the 1920's revealed a further loss of trees to accommodate the cricket pitch and by 1972 it was hardly discernible as an avenue. Finally in 1977 the last few trees were cut down and burned.

The estate had several ponds; one, in particular, not far from the house at the beginning of the avenue, is recorded in Robinson's painting and continued to appear in maps until 1878 when it seemed to have disappeared.

In 2012 my survey was enthusiastically received by the owners, who appreciated the historical research, and as a result were able to use the information when planning the landscaping of their garden.

And what a transformation we found. The walled garden, a large rectangular plot, has been broken up into compartments by fifty pleached Hornbeams. The area immediately behind the house is paved and has several large flower beds, this is separated from the lawn by a row of Hornbeams and a wide gravel path. French drains had to be inserted into the lawn to drain a damp area and another row of Hornbeams hides the climbing frame. Two Pin oaks have replaced diseased Horse Chestnuts and frame the view from the house to the gates.

Just outside the walls a new gravel path winds through the old Victorian shrubbery; the Laurels have been cut back and specimen trees, a Yellow Buck-Eye Chestnut, Swamp Cypress, Cedar of Lebanon and Lilacs, still thrive. A Cherry orchard and other trees, including a Cedar of Lebanon, Alder, Sweet Chestnut, Oak and Cypress have been planted. Self-seeded trees that threatened the walls have been removed.

As the parkland to the north of the house no longer belongs to the estate a smaller version of an avenue has been created. Eight Pin Oaks, which tolerate the anaerobic conditions left by the pond, have been planted in two rows opposite the front of the house. This new avenue partially screens the false ha-ha that was made in the 1987 to hide a public footpath. Photinias, with their red leaves, have been planted on the boundary as a reference to the brick wall that once stood there and a Yew hedge, also tolerant of the damp conditions.

How satisfying to know that not only has the history of the garden been recorded, but the survey has enabled the owners to create a contemporary garden sympathetic to its history and also the needs of modern family life.

## **Moor Park—Roger Gedy**

A visit to Moor Park by HGT members in September provided the *hors d'oeuvres* for a positive feast of 18thC landscape garden delights planned for 2016 to celebrate the tercentenary of the birth of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. (see pages 12-13) Widely known as the setting for a spectacular golf course, this great 18thC house and its park and gardens share a fascinating history. To do full justice to both house and garden HGT joined forces with NADFAS. Annie Saner invited a team of excellent guides from NADFAS to bring the history of the house to life in the morning and later, under the gaze of Antonio Verrio's gods and goddesses depicted on the ceiling above, Kate Harwood reconstructed the history of the park; who better to counteract the soporific effect of an excellent lunch and in imagination allow the avenues and sweeping vistas of Bridgeman and Brown to replace the greens and fairways visible through the open windows?

Walking the park and gardens in the afternoon in the company of Kate and the Head Gardener showed that little of the 18thC design remains. A fragment of Brown's Pleasure Ground, with his lake and the site of a cascade leading towards the House, can still be seen. The later gardens that create a setting for the mansion are beautifully kept by the staff and members of the Golf Club. In this sense, as a reflection of the rise and fall in the fame and fortune of a series of owners, Moor Park is a microcosm of the garden history of many of the 18thC 'Brownian' estates of Hertfordshire.



## **Tony Kirkham's Talk 'On Trees' - Bella Stuart-Smith**

Tony Kirkham on trees was not to be missed. The head of the arboretum at Kew wears his immense knowledge lightly and shares it generously. We followed him from his northern childhood to Kew and China, via climate change, disease management to practical planting tips and rare species, flitting through breath-taking slides and delivered totally note free for a full 90 minutes. No one will forget that you need to plant a tree in a square hole, and that most trees fail as they are planted too deeply. And how else would you stop an old oak suffering but by planting a mass of crocus to stop people walking over the roots and compacting the soil?

Most compelling for me were the parallel pictures of a hillside in China, one taken by Wilson over a hundred years ago and one current showing graphically the beauty of native forest and its need to be sustained for our planet's survival.





Tythrop Park



HGT members at 'Red Kites'



'The White House', Denham



Tythrop Park



'Kayalana', Denham



Moor Park